

ObamaCare: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor.

And what we are looking at right now is something that is an equal overreach: You can't keep your job if you won't get this jab. It is an overreach.

People that I am talking to are really anti these mandates that would force them into submission or, in some cases, into poverty, like the young mom that I talked to who works for a government contractor—sole supporter of her family at this point, has one child, wants to have another child, and because of this mandate, she is going to lose her job, a job she loves—and her employer loves her. But she is wanting to make certain she can have that second child.

These workers are very pro-freedom, and they are taking a stand on principle. They are pro-freedom. They are pro-individual rights, and what they want is for this administration to stop it, to stop their push to this socialist agenda, stop trying to force them into taking a vaccine, which is another step to having government control of their healthcare.

You know, they look at what the Democrats in Washington, DC, are doing, and they see that they are trying to take one vote. They want to win. They want to win on putting everything together—one vote—and then flipping the country to their socialist agenda—one vote: government control of your kids, of your healthcare, of your bank account, of your life, cradle to grave, daylight to dark, sunup to sundown, 24/7, 365.

You know, I have to tell you, we thought that when the Obama campaign came out with their little caricatures and cartoon-type character—only it was really frightening—“The Life of Julia,” we thought, this is ridiculous how Julia never needed anybody or anything but the Federal Government.

Well, some of that same crowd in the White House has now come up with “The Life of Linda,” and Linda must be related to Julia because Linda has the same type life experiences as Julia. There is no mention of a family or a husband, but Linda has a child. Linda works for the government. The government is in control.

See, that is what the Democratic Party wants—socialism. They are very happy with that—cradle to grave; daylight to dark; total control; tell you what to do; tell you what your job is going to be; tell you what you are going to study in school; take control of your children; send them to study whatever they want; and then have them work in a way that the government tells them they are going to work.

But what we are seeing play out in this country is the American people standing up and saying: Enough is enough. We don't want your mandate. We are tired of all of your chaotic cycle of gaslighting and government overreach. We are pushing back on your push to a socialist agenda.

I am heartened that they are not afraid to say “no, no, no” to what the Democrats are trying to push, and they are going to continue to push back because they see what is happening for what it is—a destructive, radical agenda that will destroy freedom of choice, free people, free markets, and opportunity for their children and future generations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING JOHN AMARA F. WALTERS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I think all Senators can agree that we would not be able to deliver results for the people in our States and for our country if it were not for our extraordinary staff, who work with us each and every day. They are there with us in the trenches, fighting for the constituents we pledge to serve, and defending the Constitution of the United States.

It is for that reason that I am confident my colleagues will agree with me when I say congressional staff is more than just a collection of individuals; it is a family. And it is that truth that makes my presence on the Senate floor this evening all the more difficult, because my office, our family, has lost a beloved member.

John Amara F. Walters, a legislative aide in my office, passed away on the morning of October 2, at MedStar Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC. He died in the arms of his beloved mother, Kimberley, who joins us this evening in the gallery. John was 29 years old.

On behalf of myself, our office, and the people of Maryland, I want to take a little time not only to express our profound grief at the loss of a dear friend and amazing human being, but also to tell a little bit of John's story to this Senate and to the Nation, and to pay tribute to his life, to honor all that he gave us, and to celebrate all that he gave to the world.

John Amara F. Walters was born on Friday, February 9, 1992, in Adrian, MI, to John A.M. Walters and Kimberley H. Davis Walters. He came from a long line of patriots and leaders, including his grandfather, who defended the United States in World War II as a Tuskegee Airman.

And John caught the political bug early. At age 6—yes, you all heard that right, aged 6 years old—John started working on local political campaigns. In his early years, he participated in three Presidential elections and traveled across Michigan and the country to serve communities in need. In high school, he interned for the late great Michigan Senator, Carl Levin. John

was also a committed member of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute's Pathways to Freedom program.

He excelled inside the classroom—first graduating from Adrian High School in 2010, and then going on to study at the District of Columbia's own Howard University, where he earned his BA in psychology in 2015 magna cum laude. I should add he was a loyal Howard alum and proud Bison and a favorite son of the university's.

The last time I met face-to-face—in the pre-COVID days—with the president of Howard University, Wayne Frederick, John was with me, and I told Dr. Frederick how proud we were of John's exemplary work, and Dr. Frederick was proud too.

John did all of this at a young age and more, and he achieved these things despite having a lifelong battle with sickle cell anemia—an illness that often struck him with fatigue and pain. But that didn't stop John. He refused to be defined by his illness, and he refused to allow sickle cell to prevent him from pursuing his dreams with passion and decency and dedication. It is a disease that took him from us far too soon, but it never took away his spirit or his zest for life and his commitment to making a positive change.

I will always remember John for the twinkle in his eye, his enthusiasm for everything he did, his absolute brilliance, and his commitment to helping others. Everyone in our office—and I mean everyone—loved John.

After he passed away, we held a staff Zoom call with his mother, both to grieve together and to remember John; and in that gathering, we witnessed a torrent of love and affection for all John did and what he meant to us. There were lots of tears, but also many moments of beautiful laughter, as we recounted many fun stories about John.

He gave us many things, but perhaps one of his greatest gifts was his empathy. In the world of politics and Capitol Hill, there is plenty of ambition. And John was ambitious. But empathy is often in short supply. Not in John.

Empathy is that quality where someone seeks to see the world through the eyes of another, of understanding what somebody else is experiencing by trying to walk in that person's shoes and live the world as they live it. John did not just hear the words spoken by others; he listened; he absorbed them; he dared to be vulnerable.

And what always struck me about John was his capacity to focus on the struggles experienced by others at the same time he was carrying on his own fight against sickle cell. Perhaps his own personal struggle made him far more attuned to the hardships faced by others; but whatever its source, John's capacity to care inspired us all, as did his ability to persist and carry on in the face of adversity. John embodied the very best of us.

John first joined my office as an intern right out of college, when I was

still serving in the House of Representatives. After graduating from Howard, he could have chosen many different paths. He chose public service. From John's first moments on our team, it was clear that he was not only sharp and eager to work, but that he cared deeply about his fellow colleagues and that he was completely dedicated to our mission of serving the people of Maryland and the country.

When I was elected to the Senate, I was thrilled to have John move to this side of the Capitol with me. He leapt at every opportunity to advance our mission—growing from organizing and drafting letters to constituents, to taking constituent meetings, to eventually thinking of and writing legislation. He was a vibrant force on Capitol Hill both in our office and outside of it, and was an active member of the Senate Black Legislative Staff Caucus.

When our Senate office first divided up issues among our legislative correspondents, John chose to take responsibility for some of the hottest button issues, like criminal justice reform and public safety, that demanded an open ear and a welcoming heart. He worked on gun issues and spoke to constituents who had experienced personal tragedies from gun violence, and he always brought their feelings to his work on legislation to strengthen our gun laws. When the previous administration was trying to dismantle parts of the civil service, John met with and helped Federal employees who feared they might lose their jobs at any moment. In a million different ways, John proved that empathy has a home in public service and can even direct the course of policy changes.

When we decided to hold a hearing on the hardships that Postal Service delays were imposing on Americans, John remembered a meeting he had held months earlier with a group from the National Federation of the Blind, where they discussed the real challenges they were experiencing because of the long delays in the delivery of their essential materials. John was moved by their stories at the time, and he lifted their voices. At his suggestion, we invited a member of that group to testify, and their moving and powerful testimony is now leading the changes that will help every American. That was John—listening and then bringing people's voices into the public square to change lives for the better.

John brought empathy to his work and to the office, but he also brought great joy. His desk was a must-stop place for members of our team throughout the day. People would stop by to share his company, to hear his loud and infectious laugh, to talk about the latest news of the day, or—I have been told—to joke about the craziest couple on "90 Day Fiance," which, on the enthusiastic recommendation of John and a few others, built quite a following in our office among current and past staff. I was not sure what to think about all that when I learned about it.

John brought joy with his wry wit and keen sense of the absurd—always taking his work seriously, but never taking himself too seriously. He had a critical skill on Capitol Hill—the ability to track down House and Senate receptions with the very best food, and then alert his colleagues to the spoils. If someone couldn't get away from the office, he would bring back snacks to share, pulling treats out of his pockets like a magician.

He was a true member of our office family and always a team player, always willing to advance our causes on behalf of our constituents. And in coming to know his family, I can see where those qualities began. You could see that he was supported by his beloved mother, Kimberley Davis, in the way he supported our team—always ready to help out and pitch in for the mission. You could see that he was helped and mentored by his uncles and aunts in the way he helped and mentored the new members of our office whom he worked with.

Today, in the gallery, in addition to John's mother, Kimberley, we are joined by his uncle John and John's wife, Carol; and Christian Gibbs, who was like an uncle to John.

You could see how much John was loved by those closest to him by how much he loved and embraced others, and he, in turn, was loved and respected by our entire Capitol Hill family. He was an example to all of us of a person who put everyone else's challenges ahead of his own.

Our office wants to hold John Amara Walters up as a model to other young people who walk through our doors. As I mentioned, John began his service with us when he was an intern, and we have decided to establish a permanent paid internship position in John's name and memory, and that position will always go to a student from Maryland who is attending Howard University.

In that way, we know that the young leaders of the future will learn about John's spirit and his legacy and learn to carry forward his torch of empathy and positive change.

John wanted to help others. He wanted to leave the world better than he found it. He did that and much more. While his life was far too short in years, it was long in the joy and the love he shared and in the lives he changed for the better.

Thank you, John. We love you.
I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Robinson nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Beth Robinson, of Vermont, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit.

VOTE ON ROBINSON NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Robinson nomination?

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) is necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 449 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Peters
Bennet	Hirono	Reed
Blumenthal	Kaine	Rosen
Booker	Kelly	Sanders
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Shaheen
Carper	Lujan	Sinema
Casey	Manchin	Smith
Collins	Markey	Stabenow
Coons	Menendez	Tester
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Hassan	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Padilla	Wyden

NAYS—45

Barrasso	Fischer	Moran
Blackburn	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hagerty	Risch
Braun	Hawley	Romney
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Johnson	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cramer	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Toomey
Cruz	Lummis	Tuberville
Daines	Marshall	Wicker
Ernst	McConnell	Young

NOT VOTING—4

Gillibrand	Rubio
Rounds	Tillis

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the Heytens nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Toby J. Heytens, of Virginia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit.

VOTE ON HEYTENS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Heytens nomination?

Mr. BENNET. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?